

Saint Pancras, Middlesex.

REPORT,

RECOMMENDING THAT APPLICATION BE MADE

TO THE

SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR

AUTHORITY TO MAKE REGULATIONS

AS TO

LODGING HOUSES

BY

DR. HILLIER,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

WITH APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

DRAFT REGULATIONS SUGGESTED BY DR. HILLIER.

Ordered by the Vestry to be printed November 13th, 1867.

Henry Mitchener, Machine Printer, 26, Eversholt Street, Oakley Square, N.W.

TO THE VESTRY OF ST. PANCRAS.

November 12th, 1867.

Gentlemen,

The 35th Section of the Sanitary Act, 1866, authorizes the Vestry, under the sanction of the Secretary of State, to make bye-laws for the regulation of houses let in lodgings.

It has long been felt by those who were conversant with the condition of the dwellings of the poor in London, that there is a class of property to which regulations, similar to those made by the Commissioners of Police for rooms let out to nightly lodgers, ought to be applied.

The property referred to, consists of houses originally constructed and adapted for but one family, which are, however, let out in a number of tenements to several families. In the majority, each family occupies one room only, in which all the members of it live, whether in health or in sickness, both night and day. Grown-up children of both sexes, with younger children, and the father and mother, live together in a room of small dimensions, without any partition. Here children are born; and if a member of the family dies, the corpse is retained for several days or a week in the same room.

By the section above-named, it is now competent for the Vestry to make regulations as to the following matters :—

1.—As to the number of persons who may occupy these houses or parts thereof.

2.—As to registration of such houses.

3.—As to inspection of them and keeping them in a cleanly and wholesome state.

4.—As to privy accommodation and other appliances and means of cleanliness, as well as the cleansing and ventilation of the common passages and staircases.

5.—As to periodical cleansing and lime-whiting of the premises.

The words of the Act are vague, and might be stretched to include *all houses* occupied by more than one family; but it is intended that the Vestry should so frame their regulations, as to include only such houses as need to be brought more completely than in time past under the control of the Nuisance Authority.

I would strongly recommend the Vestry at once to apply to the Secretary of State, for authority to make regulations under section 35.

One of the first points for consideration, would be to define what description of houses should be registered, and under what conditions. I should propose, that no house be required to be registered which contained more than twice as many rooms as separate tenements or families, and amongst such houses only those that appear to the Vestry from time to time to need the application of such new regulations. Before any house should come under the regulations, the owner of it should receive notice of the intention of the Vestry to place it on the register; and an opportunity would be thus given, of shewing cause why the house should not be placed under the regulations.

It would be impossible, without a very great increase of the sanitary Staff, and it would be quite unnecessary, to do more than deal with extreme cases,

such as at present are constantly found on the Complaint Books, or from which zymotic disease is scarcely ever absent.

Regulations of the kind to which I refer would be found of great service in dealing with some of the worst appointed houses, in such a street as Grafton Street, Kentish Town. Here there are 57 houses occupied by nearly 1,000 persons. Each house has six rooms, and in some houses there are six families. For these six families (consisting of from 20 to 30 persons) there is but one closet, usually without water, or supplied only from a small pipe leading from a butt or tank, nearly on a level with the closet seat, so that the pan is never flushed. The water tank for drinking and other domestic purposes is small, seldom holding 100 gallons; it is without a lid, so that dust, dirt, and noxious gases get into the water, owing to the close proximity of the dust-bin and privy; to say nothing of mischievous boys, who throw into it dead animals and refuse of various kinds.

This street requires to be visited from house to house, and room to room several times yearly, and at each inspection fresh nuisances and defective sanitary arrangements are discovered. When a nuisance is found, a notice is served on the owner, requiring him to abate the same within a specified period; at the end of this time another inspection is made; and if the works required are not carried out, the case is reported to the Sanitary Committee, who can order the Inspector to take out a summons against the owner. This causes the delay of another 10 days; the Magistrate, on hearing the evidence, issues an order to abate the nuisance, granting another 14 or 21 days. Five weeks have thus elapsed, the Inspectors' time, the Clerk's time, the Solicitor's time, and my own time have been occupied, and the owner has incurred

no penalty beyond three or four shillings costs. If the nuisance is still unabated, and this is not unfrequently the case, a fresh summons must be obtained for a penalty for neglect of the Magistrate's order. This roundabout process is generally effectual in the end to abate *grave* nuisances, but it is quite unavailable to remove sanitary evils which cannot be termed nuisances, though quite as necessary for the maintenance of health and decency.

For instance, a water butt, which is too small and without a lid, so that the water is never fit to drink, does not come under the legal definition of a nuisance; nor does a water tank, without a tap, so that the water has to be taken out by dirty mugs, pots, or pans; yet it is quite necessary that such conditions as these should not be allowed to remain.

By the adoption of suitable regulations, it would be easy, in a comparatively short time, to enforce attention to all such points as these; and what is also very important, some one known person would be held responsible for the condition of houses let out to a large number of families.

This street is only one amongst many. I have chosen it as an illustration, because it has been lately under my notice; a number of others exist in the Parish, in which some of the houses are in as bad or a worse sanitary condition than those in Grafton Street.

The regulations which appear to me to be required, are something of the kind suggested in the Appendix.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

THOS. HILLIER.

APPENDIX

DRAFT REGULATIONS.

SUGGESTED BY DR. HILLIER.

(1.) Whenever the Vestry propose to put these regulations in operation in respect to any house, they shall give notice to the owner thereof of their intention to do so, specifying the day from which these regulations shall be in force. The owner of every house, in regard to which such notice has been served, will be subject to the penalties incurred by infringing these regulations from the day specified on such notice, unless for any reason the Vestry should, even after notice, determine not to put the regulations in force in regard to that house. The word "owner" shall include any person or body receiving or entitled to receive the rents of any house from the occupier of such house, on his or their own account, or as trustee or agent for any other person or body, or as receiver or sequestrator appointed by the Court of Chancery, or under any orders thereof, or who would receive the same if such house were let to a tenant. A notice,

under this regulation, may be served by delivering the same to some person upon the premises, or at the residence of the person to whom it is addressed, as is provided in the Nuisances' Removal Act, 1855, section 31.

(2.) Every house, in respect of which these regulations are put in force, shall be registered in a book kept by the Vestry, together with the number of rooms in such house, and the name and address of the person who lets the said house. The person so registered shall be responsible for the observance of these regulations until he shall give notice to the Vestry that he has ceased to be tenant of the said house, and his successor's name and address has been registered. The person so registered, must satisfy the Vestry that he is the *bona fide* owner or tenant of the house so registered, and he will be called upon to take care that the said house is furnished with all the conveniences required by the following regulations.

(3.) No person, who shall let a house thus registered, shall permit the same to be occupied by a greater number of persons than shall be fixed by the Vestry, as is hereinafter mentioned.

(4.) A ticket, stating the entire number of persons allowed to sleep in each such house, and the number allowed to sleep in each room of the house, which number such house is registered to accommodate, will be supplied by the Vestry to the person sub-letting such house, and he is to produce such ticket whenever required by any officer appointed for inspecting such houses by the said Vestry. The Vestry will in no case sanction an accommodation less than 350 cubic feet of space for each person. Two children under ten years of age may be counted as one lodger.

(5.) The person letting such house shall reduce the number of persons permitted to inhabit the same, or

any part thereof, upon receiving notice to that effect from the said Vestry,—such notice stating the special cause of the same being given, and the period during which it shall continue in force.

(6.) The person letting such house shall keep the same in repair, and cause the walls and ceilings of every room, and of the staircases, and passages, and yards of such house to be thoroughly cleaned and well and sufficiently lime-washed once at least in every year, in the month of April, and at other times if required to do so by the Vestry; and shall cause the floors of all the rooms, passages, and stairs of such house to be kept at all times clean, and also shall cause the cellars, back-yard, and area, belonging to such house to be kept at all times clean. The person letting such house shall remove any animal which the Vestry may require him to remove from the said house, or premises adjoining the same.

(7.) The person letting such house shall cause every room to be ventilated from the outside and otherwise, and the passages and staircases in such house to be lighted and ventilated to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health of the said Vestry.

(8.) The person letting such house shall provide such a supply of water for the use of the lodgers, with proper covered cisterns and apparatus above ground, as shall be satisfactory to the Medical Officer of Health. The cisterns shall be of such size as to give at least 15 gallons a day to each inmate of such house, unless a constant supply be furnished.

(9.) Every such house shall be furnished with a covered dust-bin, of sufficient size to contain the dust, ashes, &c., that accumulate in the intervals of its being cleared away, which shall not exceed one week; such dust-bin to be in the best practicable situation, sanctioned by the Vestry. If it is desired that one dust-

bin should serve in common for two or more small houses, the sanction of the Vestry must be previously obtained thereto.

(10.) A convenient water-closet shall be provided outside every such house, or where a water-closet cannot be so provided, then in the best practicable situation, according to the judgment of the Medical Officer of Health. For every 20 persons to be accommodated a separate closet shall be provided. Each closet shall have a proper door.

(11.) Every house shall be properly drained into the public sewer, and every drain shall be provided with efficient traps at each entrance to the drain.

(12.) Every water-closet shall be provided with pan, trap, and properly-acting water apparatus, to be affixed within the cistern supplying such water; and the floor and walls thereof shall be kept free from filth, and clean in all other respects. Wherever practicable, in the opinion of the Medical Officer of Health, the water supply to the water-closet is to be wholly independent of, and unconnected with, the cistern used for domestic purposes. The roof and floor of the said closet shall be kept in good repair.

(13.) The yards, areas, and cellars of every such house shall be properly paved with flag paving, sloping towards the sink in the said yard or area. All private courts adjoining such houses shall be similarly paved.

(14.) When the Vestry shall require, every person registered, not resident in or near to any registered house, shall be obliged to appoint as his agent some person in or near to the house to see that the foregoing regulations are strictly carried out in such house, and to reinstate any defects that from time to time may occur therein. But the person registered shall be responsible for any act or default of his agent in the execution of these regulations.

(15.) Every registered house and every room thereof shall be open to the Medical Officer of Health, and any other officer duly appointed by the Vestry for the inspection thereof, between the hours of nine o'clock a.m. and ten o'clock p.m. When there is reason to believe that the regulations, respecting the number of persons to be accommodated in such house or room, are infringed, then it shall be lawful for any two such officers, acting together, to visit any house or room between the hours of ten p.m. and nine a.m.

(16.) The person letting any registered house shall at all times carry out, without delay, any measures which may be directed by the Vestry, or their Medical Officer of Health, for the purposes of disinfection, or for the preservation of health.

(17.) Any person registered to let any house in lodgings, or to be occupied by members of more than one family, who shall violate or fail to carry out any of the above regulations, shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding forty shillings for any one offence, with an additional penalty not exceeding twenty shillings for every day during which a default in obeying such regulations shall continue.

The penalties from time to time inflicted under the above regulations shall go to the Vestry, and shall be accounted for by them as receipts under the Act of Parliament.

The powers and duties imposed by these regulations upon the Vestry may be exercised by any Committee of the Vestry, to whom such Vestry see fit to entrust these functions.

